

CONSERVATION *Showcase*

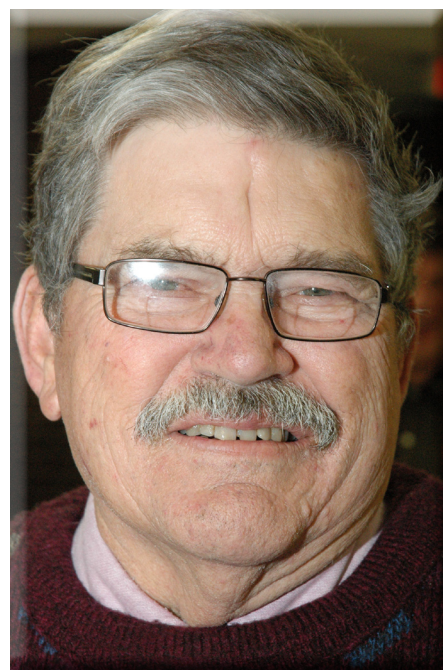


Beeler Honored for Years of Service to Conservation

A cafeteria full of well-wishers recently honored Larry Beeler of East Peru for 50 years of service to the Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). The district recognized Beeler for his long service as a commissioner and his conservation work at a dinner held Jan. 17 at the I-35 High School in Truro.

Mark Pearson, a farm broadcaster and television personality, was the master of ceremonies.

“The length of his career serving as a commissioner and farmer is proof of his dedication to land stewardship and the protection of our natural resources,” Pearson told the audience of 100 people. “Larry began farming in 1957 and a soil and water commissioner in 1958. To this day Larry is serving in both capacities.”



Larry Beeler, East Peru Farmer

During his half-century of service, Pearson credited Beeler for many good works, including being instrumental in obtaining easements for the Badger Creek Watershed. Pearson said this was one of Iowa's first watersheds projects designed under the 1954 Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program (PL-566) law. The measure reduced flooding, controlled gully erosion, developed recreation and rural water supplies, and helped farmers better manage land in the watershed.

Pearson said, “This was no small feat. The soil and water board worked together to reach their goals in only five years. Badger Creek Watershed structures still function as designed. With last year's heavy rains, we witnessed the soil saving benefits of these well-planned conservation practices.”

Beeler is 72-years-old. His family farm includes a stock cow operation and 200 acres of no-till and reduced tillage land. A majority of the farm is in permanent cover including timber, pasture and hay. Much of the day-to-day operation is carried out by his son, Gary, who farms adjoining land.

Beeler's son, Larry, an assistant state conservationist for programs at USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Des Moines, says there is a strong conservation ethic in his family carried down from generation to generation. “It's been important to my dad to protect the soil on the



Sons Gary and Larry congratulate their parents, Nelda and Larry Beeler, for being recognized by the Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) for having an award winning farm.

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farm. The stock cow operation keeps much of the steep ground in hay or crop rotation protecting the soil from erosion. In dad's life, raising and providing for a family has been number one in his life. Number two has been soil conservation," said the younger Beeler.

Beeler, and his wife Nelda, raised four children: Don, a certified industrial hygienist; Larry; Gary, who farms with his father; and Becky Koerwitz, a Denver, Colo., teacher.

District Conservationist Wayne Shafer, with NRCS' Madison County office, has been working with Beeler for 15 years on conservation issues both on the Beeler farm and at the district. "I haven't been on the Beeler farm much the last five years," Shafer admitted, "because the conservation work is done. The conservation tillage, terraces, prairie grass seeding, pasture management and soil erosion structures are all in place saving soil and cleaning the water runoff. Larry Beeler

has been working on conservation issues on his land for 51 years and it shows."

Pearson told the Truro audience Beeler's conservation work also impresses others. He announced Beeler has been invited to attend the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) convention in February to receive their Distinguished Service Award. This award recognizes individuals within NACD who have made significant contributions to the conservation and proper management of our nation's natural resources.

NACD represents America's 3,000 conservation districts and the 17,000 men and women who serve on their governing boards. Beeler is a past board member and secretary-treasurer of the association.

Beeler is also a past president of the Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI), a nonprofit organization devoted to providing educational programs on the conservation of soil, water, and other natural resources. CDI helps represent and train Iowa's 500 SWCD elected commissioners.

At the Truro recognition dinner Beeler politely refused an opportunity to address the crowd. Privately he said, "I feel honored. I've had a lot of fun running all over the country meeting a lot of people. I went into soil conservation to make it work. What I've found is soil conservation made it easier to farm and easier to do the work."

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*Dick Tremain, Public Affairs Specialist
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Friends, family and conservation co-workers surround East Peru farmer Larry Beeler as they celebrate Beeler's 50 years of volunteer work with the Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District. Joining Beeler are Tyler Bass, Richard Rogers, Beeler's son Larry, Mike Erwin, Diane Fitch, Richard Sims, and Wayne Shafer. Sims is state conservationist for USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service and Shafer is the district conservationist for Madison County.

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